

Nov 2009

SUMMARY OF 2005 MIDDLE SCHOOL VERTICAL CURRICULUM REVIEW BY JUDY TROMPF

The purpose of this review was to determine if the MSVC met its stated goals, find how it could be improved and find out how students, parents and teachers felt about it, as its successful implementation depended on the good will, shared understandings and co-operative approach of all players.

PMI	Feature	MSVC Report	My 2009 comment
+	Wide choice of semesterised units, within KLAS, and some between KLAS, while maintaining a comprehensive and balanced curriculum	Middle Years research emphasises the importance of choice to adolescent learners, giving them more responsibility for and ownership of their learning and motivation (and this was reported by students and parents). Units were seen as more student centred Over 2 years students chose 28 units from an offering of about 100 units (of these, 77 ran in 2005 e.g.) Students and parents liked the semester length units, but 15% teachers disliked it.	Originally there was concern that yr 8 students were making career choices but that is prevented by the enforced breadth of course, and over time that fear has been allayed. By the time students enter VCE they are experienced and competent negotiators, actively involved in directing their learning – also realise they can't always get everything they want.
+	Units offered at different levels of development within years 9-10	Allowed able students to choose units at a higher academic level, and less able students to choose more units at a lower level – so students could progress at their own pace	This did not work as well as it might because timetable restrictions did not always allow students to be in the most appropriate level. Also Scope and sequence in some KLAS was not clear
+	Scope for integrated learning in units like Pedal Prix, PEP (a pre VCAL unit), Media and Discover Thinking	Research like that underpinning VELs, Rich Tasks etc. Shows that students learn best when learning in context, and hence recommend integrating "subjects"	These units have been the hardest to maintain, perhaps because they were in no one's particular domain
+/-	Increased social interaction between year 9 and 10 students	65% parents, 60% teachers, 50% yr 11, 44% yr 10 and 75% yr 9 agreed that this was beneficial 30% of teachers and of yr 10 students disagreed	Although they liked the social interaction, there was a perception that the year 9 s held the year 10 s back in some units
-	Scope and sequence in the courses: maintenance of academic vigour and sequential development of skills	70% of teachers were concerned about this See recommendations	I think this is one of the biggest flaws in the MSVC – some course design was inadequate, as was the management of course delivery
-	Maths and LOTE would not join the VC,	This was to have been addressed by a small task force, comprising the	This problem actually also applies to other KLAS, where

	though Maths now offers possible choice of level in years 9 and 10.	Principal, Curriculum Coordinator and School Coordinator	the teaching of content is more important than the teaching of children at their level of readiness/ability.
**It is now well accepted by Maths educators that in the middle school there are between 5 – 8 year ability levels within the one year level if classes are not streamed. The only way to teach so many students is to teach at several levels in the one class, as we are trialling this year in years 7/8 – in other words, to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of the students. It is a lot of preparation, but by combining years 9 and 10 and having two teachers, we actually would have fewer ability levels to cover.			
0	Subject selection process	Modifications and improvements have been made continuously over the years	This is the one recommendation that has been implemented.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Academic rigour – challenge teachers to explain why – all courses to be analysed by the KLAs for scope and sequence to ensure that exiting students have reached the expected level
2. Pedagogy – continuing professional development of teachers re the nature of learning, sequential learning, teaching of mixed year levels, and new teachers to be inducted into a different approach for MS
3. Subjects not yet aligned with MSVC - to be investigated by a small task force of Principal, School Coordinator and Curriculum Coordinator
4. Social Development - encourage social activities between Yr 9 + 10 to build relationships .